

# America's Challenge to Catholic Education

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## Catholic Girl Scouts

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## The Catholic Evidence Guild

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## America's Challenge to Catholic Education

THOMAS J. HIGGINS, S.J.

*An address given at the Convention of the Catholic Educational Association of Pennsylvania held in May, 1936, at Scranton, Pa.*

THE thoughtful Catholic can find no more fascinating object for his study than our own beloved country. Things happen here on a vastness of scale that simply dazzles the foreign observer. American life is vivid; colorful; indeed, so uproarious and extreme that one is either tossed high on the peak of exaltation or cast down to the nadir of depressionistic despair. Our people seem to fashion their conduct after the moods of nature, with her extremes of arctic cold and paralyzing heat, of varied bounteous crops; of unplumbed wealth of oil, ore and timber, and on the other hand, devastating floods, crop-destroying frosts, dust storms that recall Egyptian night.

America must interest a Catholic all the more because here the Church has had fullest chance to grow. Liberty in the truest sense of the word has been accorded us. No hostile legislation has been permitted long to shackle us. No Masonic influence has driven our clergy or our teaching orders into exile. We have grown into the largest and in certain senses, the best developed minority in the country. And strangest of contrasts, we wield the least influence upon the general life of the nation. In a most amazing way, the chief currents of American life are pathetically immune to Catholic influence.

The most specific unmistakable note that Catholicism strikes is that of the supernatural. America is crudely, blatantly materialistic. Since the old Protestant creeds to which the bulk of Americans once adhered are now nothing but empty shells and rotting husks, America's spiritual inheritance is dissipated. That this mortal life is a proving ground for a more glorious life hereafter; that a Personal God of infinite perfection has given a revelation to men which they are obligated to accept; that He will come at the end of time to demand of each man an accounting for his

deeds have all faded from the consciousness of most Americans. Like the heathen, America's waking thoughts are occupied with what shall we eat, what shall we wear, how shall we be entertained? Engrossed merely with what they can taste, smell, touch and hear, for them the supernatural does not exist. Faith has disappeared—hope is non-existent. God is just a hazy vagueness which is about to float beyond the ken of the average American.

Because sin, original and actual, has wrought such havoc in human nature, Catholicism postulates simple living, the restraint of the passions, the mortification of the body. Such an attitude toward life finds no sympathetic response in a nation which takes its moral and aesthetic cue from Hollywood. To clamp down on depraved tendencies is unnatural; in fact, there are no depraved tendencies. Since there is no supernatural, no life beyond the grave, the American gathers flowers while and where he may. Abandoned farms bespeak the lure of easy money in the city, and a growing distaste for laborious manual work. The system of promotion in our public schools whereby children are advanced from grade to grade, not upon a basis of accomplishment and effort, but solely on time spent in a given grade is an absurd surrender to the line of least resistance. Our inventors devote their brains to the production of more labor-saving devices. We have become of all nations the most luxury loving. Male descendants of the pioneers who have subdued a continent go in for mud packs and permanent waves. The advertisements in our Sunday newspapers are eloquent of the American endeavor to pad the body round with every comfort. America knows no Lent, no Calvary. No wonder the French cynically say that America's chief contribution to this civilization is steam heat and orchid plumbing fixtures.

With the loss of its religion, America is fast losing its morality. Those planks of Christian morality which Protestantism had salvaged from the wreck of the sixteenth century have now been washed away in the full tide of religious indifference. Men go into bankruptcy and thereby shake off their debts with the same nonchalance that they discard an old suit. Innumerable chisellers helped to make the NRA impracticable. Too often, the securities business was a complex mess of misrepresentations and chicanery, a trap to the unwary, a happy hunting ground for the unscrupulous.

Since States, competing with one another, have made divorce as easy as possible, the marriage tie has lost all sacredness. What the Church considers an indissoluble union of man and woman ordained by God for the fulfillment of His sacred purposes, has become in American hands, a convenience for lust. Indeed, America presents a spectacle of flesh adoration unparalleled since the days of Nero. Roman Society, bad as it was, was never afflicted with nudist colonies. The fact that one-third of the deaths in New York City are due to social diseases gives its own grim reflection on the wages of sin. Cigarettes, motor cars, bathing suits, even spectacles are advertised and sold by undisguised appeals to one's ignoble passions. Advertisers naïvely confess that sex appeal is the golden goose of their business. These facts are not isolated oddities. They spring from and indicate a pagan way of living which contemptuously ignores the supernatural.

Lack of Catholic influence is abundantly apparent in the field of law enforcement. Catholic teaching demands that we render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's. It is no exaggeration to say that America is a land of law scoffers. The majesty of the law has no appeal to this generation. The idea that human laws can bind in conscience is as outdated as mutton chop whiskers. We go ahead and violate the law because we know somebody who knows somebody else who can fix things for us. With reason does the American Bar Association most candidly bewail the sad state of legal justice and the low esteem in which lawyers are too often held. Too often have courts of justice become circus rings. Perjury has destroyed the sanctity of the oath. The huge divergence between the number of homicides and the number of convictions for this crime is a scandal to the civilized world.

Wherever a Catholic culture has grown up, there has developed a rock bed of common sense in dealing with the fundamentals of life, an ability wisely to discriminate between the more important and the less important. Around us, we see an astounding lack of a stable philosophy governing the fundamental values of life. This manifests itself in diverse aberrations which make us the butt of European jibes. We restlessly jump from one fad to another, with whirlwind speed. Now it is the rage for midget golf, next

jigsaw juzzles, next the Hauptmann trial and, next week, some new gadget is flashed before our eyes and baby-like, we stretch out our hands for it. The Morro Castle burns off Asbury Park and straightway, Sunday drivers by the hundred thousands choke the roads of Jersey, urged on by an insatiable curiosity, a feverish appetite for novelty. A man is put on trial for his life and the frivolous organize junkets with Flemington Court House as their destination. We eagerly devour tattle columns which are nothing more than social sewers. Fame is measured by the frequency with which one's name appears in these muck heaps. The Saturday night ballyhoo of the carnival has taken a fixed place in every-day life. Newspapers have cruelly destroyed all privacy. Because our money men had invested solely in the Allies, we were humbugged into lining upon the Allied side under pretext of making the world safe for democracy. Like a dumb but generous sailor going to the rescue of a stranger in a tavern brawl, we step in and save the Allies only to discover in unpaid war debts that we have to pay for the smashed furniture as well. Every Saturday afternoon, mothers pack their young children off to the neighborhood movies where from 12:30 to 6:00, the little ones stamp and shriek and whistle while the Tommy guns of gangsters roar and automobiles are pushed over cliffs. This instability, this failure to appreciate the sound things upon which a sound life is built, has but one ultimate source—heresy gone sour.

America is completely secularized. God does not belong in the public life of this nation. The notion that a people as a whole should accept God's revelation and publicly acknowledge the reign of Christ the King not only over the hearts of individuals but of nations as well, simply does not get a hearing. The imprint which Puritan and Evangelical morality made upon our statute books is being erased for a system of natural ethics based upon expediency, adjustment and compromise. The public holidays of the nation no longer have any religious significance. Customs and social habits bespeak no religious origin, a phenomenon unique in history. And no wonder! The average American did not have stamped upon him in his formative years the truth that to God and religion, the first place belongs.

The state of public education is the clearest index of how

utterly secularized America has become. It affords sad proof of the statement of Our Holy Father, Pope Pius XI: "The school from which religion is excluded is contrary to the fundamental principles of education. Such a school cannot exist in practice; it is bound to become irreligious." We know religion must have first place, or it will have no place. Because religion has had no place in the American public school, our system of secular education is floundering around in a noisy confusion, in comparison to which the Tower of Babel was dulcet harmony. It is wandering around in circles, pausing now and then to say it is lost; crying out, Where am I? Where am I supposed to be going? But like Pilate asking, "What is truth?" it does not wait for an answer, but plunges off again into some ill considered project of salvation. It has delivered itself over to the experimentation of the teachers' colleges, to those contributions to knowledge contained in doctoral theses; the prescriptions of its accrediting Associations are the brain children of a new race of Brahmins, the Doctors of Philosophy whose fiat have become the laws of the Medes and Persians for the educational world, and the consequences, an unlovely, unharmonious pandemonium.

And this is not all. Professional education goes the country at large one better when it comes to ignoring Catholicism and upholding a completely secularized and godless system. Indeed, it is in the field of education that the absence of Catholic influence upon the life and manners of the nation is most apparent. The full force of collegiate snobbery is leveled against Catholic institutions. Yes, here and there, some Catholic college may have an athletic organization worthy of recognition, but intellectually and scholastically, Catholics do not exist. When there is question of obtaining a subsidy from the Carnegie Corporation, or a like institution, the old sign NO CATHOLICS NEED APPLY is hung out invisibly but effectively. In a very important sense, education is more un-Catholic than the country at large. The ordinary man who has substituted Sunday late sleep and golf for divine worship, who carelessly drifts through life, bumping from one violation of the Divine law to another, still hears upon occasion the small quiet voice within him telling him that all his not as it should be. He has his moments of uneasy realization that there is some-

thing wanting in his life. Education, at least at the higher levels, is strenuously justifying America's backsliding. According to its findings, there is no backsliding. Such a thing as sin or moral evil does not exist. The scientific method applied to man's social relations has relegated to the ash-heap of outdated taboos along with witchcraft and prohibition. If a creed could be built up from the clashing jargon of modern university doctrines, it would run something like this:

"It is an unquestionable dogma that all things are ruled by blind evolution. Man is just an erect and hairless monkey just a few chromosomes different from his cousin, the ape. Because of superior cunning, he has clawed and fought his way to the lordship of the jungle. The same relentless, evolutionary law of the jungle rules him still. For he is only a chemical mechanism, his life, just a set of chemical reactions. Since death will destroy him utterly, he must seize his present and only chance of self-improvement and self-expression. Whether this self-expression takes the form of high finance, alcoholism, holding down a corner in the eternal triangle or championship bridge matters not. The main point is that the development of his personality must not be stunted by the outworn bogies of Christian morality; because Christian morality is merely a formula of principles hit upon by a group of animals and moral laws are statements of habit, blindly struck out and blindly followed by groups of monkeys in the struggle for existence. At best, it is a set of Mother Grundy rules, utterly unsuited to this streamlined age.

"Therefore, pleasure is the noblest pursuit of man. Chastity and sexual restraint are physiological and psychological errors. One grows healthy by giving one's sexuality full reign, whereas continence leads to every manner of nervous disorder. Marriage is a barbarous institution conceived in male jealousy, a holdover system of legalized prostitution.

"Since a person is only a chaos of sensations, free will is a myth. What he seems to do of his own accord, he really does upon the compulsion of pre-determining forces. Hence there is no such thing as sins or crimes, for these are the result solely of various chemicals called hormones manufactured by the different glands. Immortality is a medieval



delusion; religion an exploded superstition unworthy of those who aspire to the abundant life. Those who still believe in a Personal God who has laid His law upon mankind are more to be pitied than censured, for they are the victims of fanatics, of Bible-backed fossils. The Bible is like Homer, a gaudy pattern of myths, amusing but childish folklore, teeming with ludicrous errors, accepted only by ignorant hill-billies. For the majority of educated people have given up the idea of a Deity. It has been scientifically demonstrated that God does not, cannot exist."

From these headwaters of materialistic Atheism, there is coming in ever-increasing volume as the future leaders of the nation, a stream of graduates, cynical men and women, stripped of every spiritual sense, blinded sometimes to elementary prescriptions of the natural law, utterly incapable of appreciating the Catholic viewpoint, impervious to Catholic influences.

Like so many other nations, America is wrestling with a gigantic, seemingly insoluble economic problem. Year by year, the public debt is mounting. To reduce unemployment, public money is literally sprayed over the country, yet more than 12,000,000 potential wage earners can find no employment. Late marriages, women in business, birth control, all of these directly traceable to economic stringency, are drying up the natural sources of population and eating into the vitals of national well being. A vast domain is ours capable of supporting a population many times our present numbers. Untapped resources of oils, minerals, gas abound, yet undernourished children are growing to incompetent manhood. We have more than enough to go around, yet it doesn't go around. Something is grievously wrong with our system of dispensing nature's bounty, yet no one can discover the proper remedy.

We Catholics know in a vague general way that our economic ills are ultimately due to moral disorder; that the breakdown in industry and finance is caused ultimately by the greed, sloth and pride of men. We see there is no attempt to allow the Sermon on the Mount to operate in the daily life of the nation. But no Catholic thinker of national stature has arisen as another Moses to lead us out of the desert.

We Catholics rightfully maintain that God's revelation

to us is sufficient for the whole of life; that it alone can adequately solve every problem of human unhappiness; that Catholic culture is able to produce wise and thoughtful men able for the most unpredictable emergency. What Good Samaritan will rise from our midst now to pour oil and wine into the wounds of America? We who have taken to heart the words of Christ: "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and its justice and all these other things will be added unto you" what answer can we give to the appalling problem of America?

Colossal as is the economic plight of America today, this is only a prelude to another but infinitely more serious problem—the economic shoe is pinching now, but shortly the whole frame of life will ache and pain for morally and religiously, America is next to bankruptcy. But it has not yet begun to feel this. The bill for its wild orgy of divorce, free-love, perjury, grafting and irreligion is yet to be presented. America has yet to taste the bitterness of Dead Sea fruit.

But just as inevitably as the pop-eyed finance in the boom days wound up in the cataclysm of October, 1929, just so surely will America find itself in the situation of the prodigal bereft even of husks. The next time America engages in protracted war, it will learn in the reduced stamina of its youth, the folly of pampering the body, of allowing children to grow up undisciplined. After trial marriage, adultery and divorce have eaten into the vitals of family life, after our state universities have continued to produce its present breed of Godless graduate, then let a major calamity visit the country at large and it will fall as did the house in the Gospel that was built on sand.

Yes, America has squandered its moral inheritance. It chooses not to have God in its thought. It must awaken to its loss of God. But when the pendulum swings back again and America humble and desolate of spirit has come to experience what an awful thing it is to have abandoned the Lord, its God, to whom or to what will it turn? It must have some religion. What sort of religion will it be? It must have a God, but what gods will it choose. Will it turn to devil worship, to the theosophy of the East, to the nirvanah of the yogis? Will it weave for itself from the heresies of the centuries a new religion? Or will it hear the

voice of the Bride of Christ summoning it to repentance and a place at the banquet of the Father? There must come a reaction to the irreligion of this age. Will that reaction be toward the Catholic Church? This is the chief challenge that faces Catholic America.

This is but a slap-dash sketch of a situation and a problem that constitutes a ringing challenge to our intelligence and our courage. It is a problem that cries out as a full field cries out to the harvester; as the passage to India called to Columbus. What are we going to do about it? You may repeat to yourself, "Well, what do we have to do about it? We are not the rulers, the divinely appointed guardians of the Church in America." But we cannot slip away under pretext that this difficulty does not belong on the doorstep of Catholic education. Education in America is a growing power for good or evil. In the years to come, there will not be less of it but more. Christ's divine command to go and teach all nations falls heavily upon those engaged in Catholic educational activities. Just as surely as America's moral disaster is traceable to the failure of the little red schoolhouse and its exclusion of God from the hearts of the young, so in my opinion, the spiritual rebirth of our nation must proceed from our Catholic schools.

The obvious thing we can do is to look to the constant perfecting of our own internal excellence. We have an all-impelling motive to make our Catholic system in method, content and administration of such evident greatness that its prestige will attract to it that attention and consequent influence which is now denied it. This means that every man and woman engaged in Catholic education, appreciating the seriousness of his task and the greatness of his opportunity will strive manfully to measure up to them. This takes not so much brilliance as sweat and industry. This means that all of us take the utmost pains to become as excellent a teacher, supervisor or administrator as is possible to our individual talents; that we spend ourselves generously to make ourselves men and women of mark; that in our own world, be it large or small, we become persons of distinction.

This necessarily entails forgetfulness of self and comfort, the sacrifice of personal ambitions; it means the submersion of self in the common good of the Catholic cause; a humble

willingness to examine our scholastic consciences; to seek out our defects; to listen to proper criticisms; to make sensible resolutions constantly to improve ourselves. It means broader vision, a wider outlook, forgetting of parochial and community rivalries.

Let us in passing take a word of warning from the tragic example of Spain. The sad sight of burning churches and convents, set ablaze by men who were at least baptized into the Church, is convincing testimony that Catholic education in Spain or perhaps the lack of it, has not fulfilled its lofty mission, for properly trained, the sheep do not rise against the shepherd. Let us also learn the lesson contained in the constantly dwindling number of children who enter the elementary schools. Here is an opportunity for the Church created by the very powers of evil, for if non-Catholics fail to propagate and our Catholic people are faithful to fulfill God's primary law regarding matrimony, then within the space of two generations, this country by the natural process of generation will be a predominantly Catholic nation. But the Catholic parents of tomorrow are in our schools today. How they will resist temptation and measure up to the responsibilities of the married state will depend in no inconsiderable manner upon the training we give them now.

It is notorious how all our Catholic schools in the formulation of educational policy are led by the nose by outside agencies. I freely admit Catholic schools have in many respects been tremendously benefited by joining accrediting associations, but why must we grovel in the dust before them? In conforming ourselves to their norms, to what are we actually subjecting ourselves? Let me take for example the field of secondary education. It is no secret that the Commission on Secondary Education of the Middle States Association is an appanage of the University of Pennsylvania. Its permanent quarters are on that campus. Its Chairman is the head of the Department of Education in that University. The minutely detailed, nosey-parker questionnaires sent out annually to member schools are composed in great part by the fledgling doctors of education in that department. The returned reports are examined, criticized, commented upon, approved or disapproved by candidates for the doctor's degree or by the secretary to the Chairman. The Commission itself meets but once or twice

a year to rubber stamp the recommendations passed up to it. Thus are the secondary schools in this area in a fair way to become mere guinea pigs for the experimentation of a department head and his candidates for the Doctorate. I have no quarrel with conformity to norms. We must have standards wisely chosen, administered and adhered to. But what Catholic has a real voice in the formation of these norms? The time has come when we must demand and receive our proportionate voice in the councils of the powers that rule the educational world. We must in season and out of season remind the educational bigwigs that our present lack of representation is an odious tyranny. Let us remember, however, to demand our rightful voice not so much with an aggressive sensitiveness betraying a feeling of inferiority, but rather with serene assurance of one confident in his power, secure in the justice of his cause.

Last November was the first time within the memory of man that a representative of a Catholic institution appeared upon the program at the Convention of the Middle States. Will it be the last? Catholic colleges constitute one-third of the members of this body, yet all we do is pay our dues. Catholics come by the hundreds to these meetings, listen sometimes to the veriest drivel in general assemblies, sit mumchance during the discussion and go home grateful that we have not been scratched off the list of approved schools. In the March issue of the publication of the Association of American Colleges, ninety-seven Catholic colleges are listed as members. In the same volume, six reports and twenty-five articles, many of them touching the fundamental philosophy of education appear. But not one from a Catholic viewpoint, or by a Catholic. We want more than toleration from the world of education, more than condescending words. We want representation upon committees, our share of places upon annual programs, a voice of power and influence. Let us take a page from the book of the Jews. The world over, they know the key positions of life and make for them with unerring instinct. What Catholics are in key positions in the world of American education?

It is typical of the situation I have attempted to explain that in the United States Senate, there are six Catholic Senators out of ninety-six; that of the names listed in "Who's

Who," five per cent alone are Catholics. When business men tell us that in the lower strata of industry, finance, journalism, etc., there is a proportional representation of Catholics but a woful absence at the top, we are forced to conclude how sterile we are in Catholic leadership. It is the imperative duty of Catholic education to produce these needed Catholic leaders. Whence are they to come? Solely from our Catholic colleges.

This means in the first instance, that all Catholics desiring a higher education should receive it in a Catholic college. In this state alone, there are more Catholics attending secular colleges than there are Catholics in our own colleges. Yet a sacred canon of the Church forbids under pain of mortal sin the attendance of a Catholic at a non-Catholic school, without the explicit permission of his Ordinary. If Canon 1374 were observed and all Catholic students attended Catholic colleges, what an enhancement of prestige this would mean. For the Catholic college, the day of the doldrums, of scratching for a bare living would be over and it could blossom out into fruitful productive life.

Our need of Catholic leadership places a mighty responsibility upon our Catholic colleges. The demands of accrediting associations, the dizzy gyrations of secular education adopting and abandoning new methods, plans and principles must not stampede us into a surrender of what is finest in the cultural traditions we have inherited—the care of the soul, the training of the will. Cafeteria education can never produce men of character. Since we possess the truth concerning the whole of man's nature, it will be our own fault if we fail to breed leaders.

We must learn a lesson from secular education and teach our boys how to stand upon their feet intellectually. Hitherto, we have coddled them; we have done too much for them; we have spoon-fed them too long. The land is full of new difficulties, novel situations to which the old answers will not fit. Graduates of Catholic colleges will never attain true leadership unless they have been taught to think for themselves.

This means our colleges must give America men pre-eminent in the physical sciences. The intellectual world of America must be convinced that there can be no true conflict between science and religion. Men of genius aptly

trained are needed to discover the avenue of approach to the modern mind, for just as the Church took over and Christianized the humanist movement of the Fifteenth Century, so must it Christianize the scientific movement of today.

Our colleges must offer their students and through them the nation, a positive social program. Society has burst its old banks and is seeking new channels. Atheistic Communism is feverishly laboring to master the new order. From Catholic colleges must come Catholic thinkers able to present the everlasting truths of Christian morality to a new age. Herein, I believe, is the key to the entire situation. The Church in America will stand or fall in proportion as it successfully answers the problem of American society.

Let us not be appalled at the gigantic task that faces us. We can do all things in Him Who strengthens us. We have inherited a generous measure of courage from our ancestors. God will not be wanting to supply what is lacking to our feebleness. Catholic Education has behind it a glorious triumph which time can never dim. Our parochial schools have preserved the Faith in our midst. This was a victory of defense. Now new conquests beckon us. From the ruins of Protestantism, from the unlovely clangor of error, chaos and unrest, opportunity comes rushing to us with gigantic strides. A new dawn stands tiptoe on the mountain tops. The full day will shine upon the triumph of the Cross if we go forward with a courage worthy of the high task that is ours. For we are called to bear before the powers and rulers of this land that eternal truth against which the Gates of Hell cannot prevail.

## Catholic Girl Scouts

REV. CHARLES J. MCGOVERN

*Address given over Station WIP, reprinted from the Catholic Standard and Times (Philadelphia, Pa.), in the issue of May 8, 1936.*

BY a happy turn of phrase, discontent has been called "the secret spur of all our enterprises." Discontent, but withal a mild and gentle discontent, was very probably the mainspring of Girl Scouting, as an American movement. In the year 1912, Mrs. Juliette Low, of Savannah, Ga., was dissatisfied with the opportunities afforded the growing American girl to realize the ideals of womanhood. The dissatisfaction, never violent, of course, was more in the nature of a longing for that which has been and might be; hers, a somewhat wistful but always sincere attempt to express in terms of American needs, the program so ably developed by her friends, Lord and Lady Baden Powell, co-founders of the Girl Guides in England. To the question how well and lastingly Mrs. Low laid the foundations of a new and brighter record in the lives of our American girls, 350,000 enthusiastic Scouts today supply the answer.

### MOVEMENT NOT SECTARIAN

A vital consciousness of the growing need of a recreational program suitable for Catholic girls, inspired the editor of a Catholic weekly in 1918 to investigate the aims and activities of Girl Scouting. At no time, from its origin, had this movement been sectarian. Catholics, however, had never officially coöperated in the plan. It was, therefore, possible that its philosophy and principles might contradict the teachings of the Catholic Church. Investigation, however, disclosed no antagonism either real or dormant.

At once it was arranged that a distinguished Catholic laywoman be appointed to a place on the National Board. An experienced social worker, she quickly came to appreciate the possibilities of Scouting for the Catholic girl. A difficult and delicate problem was that of religious services in camp. The Catholic member of the Board was given every facility in solving it. It was made possible always for Cath-



olic Girl Scouts to attend Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation; a national requirement followed that every camp staff must include members of three major religious groups, Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish, and that one duty of those counsellors is to see that each girl attends the church of her Faith.

Other details, some major, some minor, having been adjusted to the mutual satisfaction of the Catholic and other members of the Girl Scout National Board, it was decided to invite the approval of the Catholic Hierarchy. This was promptly given by His Eminence, Cardinal Hayes, who had been approached.

#### BLESSING OF POPE

In due course, the present American Cardinalate, including His Eminence, Cardinal Dougherty, and more than half of the American Hierarchy have graciously approved the movement. Finally, the American branch of this world organization was officially brought to the notice of His Holiness, Pope Pius XI, who sent his pontifical blessing to the Girl Scouts and their leaders.

The next ten years witnessed a steady growth of Girl Scouting in Catholic circles throughout the country. Then, in 1929, was initiated a special promotion program. A more widespread and elaborate system of securing and training leaders of troops, members of councils and other volunteer workers was provided. Catholic laywomen showed themselves increasingly alive to the possibilities. Some Sisterhoods included Girl Scout leadership training as a subject of instruction in the novitiate. It was decided to include a special Catholic worker in the local staff wherever and whenever Catholic interests warranted the expense. Philadelphia was among the first to adopt this plan.

Over a million and a half American girls have benefited by the Scout program since its beginning, in 1912. Regrettable, however, is the fewness of Catholic membership. The most recent statistics indicate that only eight per cent of the troops are organized in parish schools and buildings connected with Catholic churches. Almost 200 colleges and universities (of which almost two score are Catholic) furnish their enrollment the opportunity to receive the training course; and more than 4,000 Catholic young women have

hastened to possess themselves of highly perfected and invaluable training.

#### CHILD PROBLEMS

A judicious, and in no way hysterical, examination of child problems today will reveal the necessity of an extra-home program created and spurred on by the highest and noblest of ideals, and, which, under the proper supervision, may supplement, without attempting to usurp, the training of the home. It is significant that youth movements have sprung up everywhere. Their leaders, keen, alert, alive to the needs of the hour, have been galvanized into action by the importance of their subject. One of these—the Girl Scout movement—takes front rank among the most favored agencies now working for good in this, our country. It would certainly manifest a pitiable unfamiliarity with home life as it is lived today, were we to hold fast to the opinion that home and school and church are in every instance sufficient for the development of the girl in the teen age.

Moreover, the time factor plays a most important part in her progress. Is it not obvious that no more than a fourth of a girl's waking hours are spent within the influence of the school and church? What, then, if in the remaining three-fourths of the girl's leisure hours at home, the very necessary foundation of character be subjected to little or no permanent construction?

It is here that the Girl Scout program achieves its greatest purpose. Horrible indictments have been pronounced upon the modern parents who utterly ignore the responsibilities of forming their children's characters. And not without reason. But much of the tragedy is softened by the thinking, selfless qualities the Girl Scout program offers the children of these negligent parents. The defects of their shiftless parents, the pernicious influence of faulty home surroundings, are greatly overcome even as the character training of properly responsible parents has been enhanced and augmented.

#### BASIC PRINCIPLES

The basic principles of Girl Scouting are found in its promise and laws. The promise helps to develop loyalty toward God and country; it promotes all the natural virtues

of kindness, courage, loyalty, cleanliness of speech, thought and deed. Yet none of these is the fruit of mere abstract discussion, but sculptured and engraven by the power of practical example and application. A Girl Scout is not merely lectured on the value of courage. Life saving and first aid are taught her that she may exercise an intelligent discharge of that virtue. Nor is she simply instructed in her duty to her neighbor. She is shown how to help a fellow Scout, to prepare meals capably and adequately for hungry hikers, to assist her more dependent neighbors. She is not merely a member of a troop, she is inspired to feel a deep and sincere interest in her community. The sense of responsibility is developed in her, by admitting her to share in community service projects. The qualities of leadership are impressed upon her, by encouraging her to make decisions for herself, yet to be broad enough to listen respectfully, and above all, tolerantly to the opinions of others. Initiative and ingenuity she acquires; for her motto is "Be prepared." No emergency, it is hoped, will ever find her demoralized and incompetent.

While the Girl Scout program suggests more than fifty activities, including domestic, and cultural arts, athletics and allied indoor occupations, such as are popular among girls from ten to eighteen years in age, none of these is obligatory, unless the Scout wishes to advance in rank. Scouting is intended to recreate and please—not to oppress.

Even as it is difficult to estimate the tremendous amount of good that has come from this colorful movement, so is it difficult to overestimate the coöperation of the zealous and talented religious of the archdiocese in this particular field. Their experience as educators has shown them how ideally fitted Girl Scouting is for the girl in her teens. The question is not one of sentiment—but of substantial. In no payment of respect may we lightly dismiss the various bodies of Catholic laywomen who have struggled to expand the membership among Catholic girls in this city. Theirs is the glory of pioneering. But more than ever is there a real need for other trained, zealous, interested women who will exemplify the enduring superstructure of lives builded upon love of God and love of country. Let no high-minded Catholic woman prove herself recreant to this noble task nor indifferent to her happy heritage.

## The Catholic Evidence Guild

*An editorial reprinted from the Catholic Standard and Times  
(Philadelphia, Pa.), in the issue of May 1, 1936.*

A NEW form of Catholic activity is slowly spreading through this country. To those dioceses which have already permitted laymen to deliver addresses on religious subjects in the public streets must now be added New York, which for some years has hesitated to give the necessary license.

It is nearly twenty years since the Westminster Guild reduced the street corner apostolate to what one might call an exact science. During that time the mental attitude of the casual listener has completely changed. When the first laymen attempted to explain Catholic doctrine to the crowds in Hyde Park, they were greeted with a strong Protestant reaction. People hurled Bible texts and the catch words of dying controversies. They still had some knowledge of the religion that they professed. Now everything is changed. The Bible has become a closed book which in the minds of most people is something long since discredited. The work of radical criticism has filtered down to the masses through the agency of popular magazines and novels; and the general opinion is that the Sacred Scriptures are only a collection of pious fables with no more authority than the Koran or the Hindoo Vedas. They do not know, and how should they, that the battle for the authenticity of the written word of God has been won and that there was never a time in Christendom when we could be more sure of the record of God's revelation.

The street speaker is now facing those who regard religion as a hobby or a fad. In the popular speech most people will tell you that they do not bother with it. In America, however, there still remains a great reverence for the beliefs of others and a strong feeling that religious liberty must be maintained. How long will this last? How long can it last if the opinion gains ground that religion is allied with those who are opposed to the revolutionary ideas that are spreading everywhere?

Such a condition is undoubtedly the result of many years of godless education, and, what is almost as bad, of ineffective religious instruction. Those children who have attended Sunday school have only learnt verbal forms which conveyed nothing to their intelligence.

The Catholic Guildsman faces a pagan crowd, *i. e.*, pagan in the sense that it is satisfied that man is the measure of all things, and that God, if He really exists, either takes no interest in the world, or is to be propitiated by magic rites which have no relation to common sense. Superstition remains, of course, and increases, for the human need of the supernatural cannot be left unsatisfied. Under such conditions the work is simplified. The speaker does not need to enter into ancient controversies. His work is to teach, explain, and answer honest questions.

It is not until one gets into this public forum that the amazing ignorance of Christianity is discovered. When the Guild starts work at any pitch the first listeners will for the most part be Catholic. Many of them will disguise their religious affiliation in order to ask questions that they would be ashamed to disclose to a priest. One realizes, perhaps for the first time, the extent of the leakage from the Church. Accustomed as Catholics are to crowded Masses, well-attended missions, and overflowing attendance at popular devotions, they do not think of the vast numbers who have been baptized in the Church, and who still call themselves Catholics, but who have no more knowledge of their religion than those to whom the Gospel has never been preached. Children of mixed marriages, of neglected homes, and of foreign parentage, they will be lost for ever to religion unless it is carried to them. To suppose that such people are likely to make missions, or to seek the confessional is to be carried away with a false optimism. There is only one way to reach them and that is to follow them into the streets and engage their interest without making them disclose their identity. Such people are far worse off than those who have never been Catholics. Prejudice will keep them away from non-Catholic agencies, and slumbering resentment makes them a prey to revolutionary movements. It is almost always the case that a bad Catholic harbors some dislike for the priests. It is such people that the layman can reach.

It is on the Guild platform that one gets to know the extraordinary perversions of the truth. Protestants have not the slightest idea of what the Church teaches. They have weird explanations of their own to account for the influence of the Church. On the other hand the lax Catholics know practically nothing about the Sacraments; could give you no intelligent explanation of the Mass which they once frequented; have the haziest notions about the principles of the marriage laws; and regard their membership in the Church as a family tradition which they are incapable of handing on to their children.

Who are the people for this work? Anyone who has a real love for his religion. No educational advantages are necessary, indeed, they are often a bar. No one can go on the platform without long and earnest preparation. No one can undertake such a work without authorization and careful supervision. The technique, however, has been developed and nothing is needed but an abundance of devoted service.

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